

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

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Vantage Point

Conservation Kin

William Shakespeare wrote, “One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.” I like to think of Missouri Department of Conservation employees as a large, extended family sharing a common vision for protecting and managing the fish, forests, and wildlife of Missouri.

Leading the Human Resources Division gives me the unique opportunity to learn about the backgrounds and experiences of nearly all new Conservation Department family members early in their careers. Their diversity and talent is amazing. They remind me how fortunate the Department is to attract such highly qualified individuals.

The Conservation Department maintains approximately 11,000 applications from people who want to work with us. It is not unusual for 100 or more people to apply for an open position. To succeed in the job competition here, applicants must demonstrate the competence and communication skills necessary to provide high quality service.

New employees are always proud to have been selected for their positions. Most of them are seeking more than a job. They are pursuing a career that will give them the opportunity to significantly affect Missouri’s forest fish and wildlife resources.

Most new employees are enthusiastic about their jobs when they start, but at the Conservation Department this initial spark never fades. New employee pride deepens and matures into continuing loyalty and dedication to the Department’s mission.

Long-term commitment is the norm among Conservation Department employees. Fewer than 5 percent of Conservation Department employees resign from their jobs. Most employees continue their conservation careers for decades. More than 13 percent of our employees have more than 25 years of Department service, and more than one-third have knowledge and experience gained from 15 or more years of service.

Thanks to this kind of employee dedication, future generations of Missourians can be assured that our



Debbie Goff (right) with Conservation Department employees.

fish, forest and wildlife will continue to receive the best possible care. It means that the 45 percent of our employees with fewer than 10 years of experience are preparing themselves—and are being prepared through their experiences—for a lifetime of work and leadership on behalf of conservation.

Terry Tempest Williams, Naturalist-in-Residence at the Utah Museum of Natural History wrote, “The enterprise of conservation is a revolution, an evolution of the spirit.” I believe the commonly held spirit of conserving nature fosters a unity among our employees. All are keenly aware of their interdependent roles in meeting the mission of the Conservation Department. We work together as a family, valuing each other’s contributions, promoting an environment of respect, courtesy and dignity. We support each other in the work we do and inspire each other to present an image of service of which we all are proud.

When it comes to conservation, we are all “kin.” This unity of purpose helps provide a strong degree of public service, as well as the best protection and management possible for Missouri’s forests, fish and wildlife.

Debbie Goff, Human Resources Division Administrator

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RAISING HELLBENDERS

I enjoyed reading "What's Hurting Our Hellbenders?" by Jeff Briggler.

This August I will begin my second year at the University of Missouri-Rolla, and while most students in the work study program have jobs in offices, computer labs or the library, my job is working on a research project involving hellbenders and water quality.

On weekends, we travel to two sites in southern Missouri to snorkel for hellbenders. Once caught, the animals are put to sleep and a safe amount of blood is taken from them. The blood plasma is sent to a lab and tested for estrogen levels and other parameters. Hellbenders are amazing creatures. I feel privileged to work for their benefit.

Jennifer Jacobi, St. Charles

HAMMING IT UP

I've been eating deer for 40 years. I used to disguise its taste in chili or tacos, but today I'd rather eat venison than beef.

My friend who works at a meat processing plant said that's because,

comparatively, beef may not be as good as it used to be. You rarely get corn-fed beef anymore. The meat is leaner than it used to be, and cattle are often given supplements to make them grow faster.

I'd suggest people try deer hams. I haven't found a processor that wasn't willing to cure the hind quarters or shoulders. Most do stipulate, however, that you to bring 6-8 hams to them at a time. You can collaborate with your buddies and take in several hams (accompanied by your tags).

Specialty meats are great, but they're expensive. The hams have run me \$6 to \$8 each. You won't believe how good they are for breakfast with eggs, or in ham and cheese sandwiches, salads, casseroles or other ham dishes.

Guy Defenbaugh, Savanna

CROPPING SERICEA

The July issue with the story on sericea lespedeza was outstanding. This invasive plant is one weed that can literally create its own monoculture, leaving

behind no value for wildlife or livestock. Landowners are becoming more and more aware of this plant's impact on our wildlife and livestock grazing areas.

In my experience as a rangeland management specialist, I have seen this plant invade and conquer fescue and native warm season grass pastures, move rapidly along waterways, and even into heavy, late succession forest areas where we would have thought there was not enough light.

Awareness is the first step in managing invasive species. Knowing how to recognize it before it becomes a problem is next. Your efforts and great photography will be a great help to landowners who are needing this information.

Rodger A. Benson, Dow AgroSciences

HUNT AT HUNT

Congratulations to Joshua Simpson on his winning a hunt at J. B. Hunt Lodge. It was incorrectly stated in the July *Conservationist* that J. B. Hunt Lodge is located in Barry County. It is located in McDonald County.

I am sure that Joshua is going to enjoy his hunt. This is beautiful country.

Mary Lou Shaddox, McDonald County

MAGNETIC MAGAZINE

Thanks for doing such a great job with the *Conservationist*. It's a great visual aid for young and old alike. Your magazine is a magnet for our 20-month-old granddaughter. She grabs it over other children's books, and we sit on the floor, her in my lap, going over every page in detail.

Carole Neumeyer, Reeds

CARP SALAD

I enjoyed your article about carp. You discussed cooking methods and I wanted to share one of mine with your readers.

One year my son and some friends brought a pickup load of carp home from a conservation area when they



FAUX FLOWER

Harold R. Russell of Tipton Ford (south of Joplin) found this colorful spider web on a peony bush at his home. He said the colored part of the web is about 1 inch across, and the supporting web spread to about 8 inches. "The web resembles a flower, which is what the spider intended, I guess," Russell said.

were allowing people to net them.

I placed the cleaned fish in jars, covered them with water and pressure-cooked them. The result was delicious. The cooked meat tasted identical to canned salmon.

I took some carp salad to several diners and everyone complimented me on the "salmon salad." Also, when I was a child, my grandmother would fry the eggs. She rolled them in flower and corn meal. They were very good.

Darla Halterman, Norborne

BUOYED BY BUZZARDS

Thank you and congratulations on the articles and photos of both the black and turkey vulture (buzzard). I find them

very inspirational. It would seem we share a fondness for these big graceful, flying birds.

I have your close-up photo of the buzzard head in a frame over my work bench. I enjoy watching for these high fliers each morning as I drive to my shop in Benton County.

Jim Maxwell, Cole Camp

UNNETTLED

When I was a child and my dad and I went hiking in Ohio, I would sometimes wander into a patch of nettles. Ow!

My dad got mud from a nearby stream and coated my legs. I got instant relief.

Margery Vosburgh, Ste. Genevieve

The letters printed here reflect readers' opinions about the Conservationist and its contents. Space limitations prevent us from printing all letters, but we welcome signed comments from our readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Ask the Ombudsman



Q: Last September I noticed a number of persimmon limbs (about a half inch in diameter) cleanly cut, lying around the base of the trees with the fruit still on them. Can you shed any light on this?

A: Squirrels will sometimes nip off small limbs, but this sounds like the work of a twig cutter. Two types of longhorn beetles cause this type of damage—twig pruners and twig girdlers. A twig pruner larva tunnels within a branch, making a series of cuts out from the center of the branch, leaving only the bark intact. The branch eventually breaks and falls to the ground. The female girdles a branch by chewing a V-shaped notch completely around the limb. She then deposits her eggs in the branch. The larvae develop in those dead branches, which also fall to the ground. Branches attacked by these two beetles range from 1/4-inch to 3/4-inch in diameter and from a few inches to three feet in length. These beetles prefer oaks and hickories, but persimmon, elm, basswood, dogwood and some fruit trees can be damaged, too. Where pruner or girdler infestations are heavy, you can rake and burn fallen twigs and branches to reduce population levels. For online information, try a web search using the key words "twig girdler."

Ombudsman Ken Drenon will respond to your questions, suggestions or complaints concerning Conservation Department programs. Write him at P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, call him at 573/522-4115, ext. 3848, or e-mail him at <Ken.drenon@mdc.mo.gov>.

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EAGLE BLUFFS CONSERVATION AREA is a 4,269-acre, wildlife oasis just six miles southwest of Columbia, at the confluence of the Missouri River and Perche Creek. With funds made available by the Conservation sales tax, the Conservation Department was able to purchase the area in 1989 and has developed it as a wetland. It opened for public use in October 1995.

Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area is unique in that the water for wetland habitat management on the area starts as effluent from the City of Columbia. The water cleans up as it passes through the city's four wastewater treatment wetlands. By the time it arrives at Eagle Bluffs, located next door to the treatment facility, the water is pollution-free.

Eagle Bluffs is an important feeding and sheltering spot for migrating waterfowl and water birds. Naturally, one of the most popular activities here is waterfowl hunting. People also visit the area to dove hunt, archery deer hunt, fish, hike, take pictures, study nature and view wildlife.

The area's high duck population and proximity to a large population center also provide a unique opportunity to get people who love nature and the outdoors involved in an important waterfowl study.

Volunteers at Eagle Bluffs have been working with the area's wood duck population since 1998.

In 1997, only Conservation Department employees were involved in the wood duck trapping and banding program. The banding program provides data for estimating survival rates, band recovery rates, harvest rates and harvest distribution. Banding wood ducks also provides the Conservation Department and other agencies with long-term data on migration routes, as well as data from breeding and wintering areas.

The trapping method used then is known as brood trapping, which involves time-consuming and sometimes strenuous work. Brood traps are floating traps that allow wood ducks to enter through several open doors. Once inside, the birds are unable to exit due to the intricate construction of the doors.

Workers banded 109 wood ducks by the end of 1997. Because of this success, the Conservation Department selected the area to be a wood duck banding quota area. Maintaining this status meant that each year, starting in 1998, at least 100 birds had to be banded.

The staff at Eagle Bluffs decided that the program offered a chance to enlist volunteers to assist them in trapping and banding wood ducks.

Volunteers sustain an important wood duck study at Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area.

by Ryan Kelly,
photos by Jim Rathert



Volunteers of all ages pin down rocket-propelled nets and remove captured wood ducks for banding.

WOOD DUCK Banding and Nesting





A pilot wood duck volunteer program began in 1998. That first year, volunteers baited and maintained brood traps. Also in 1998, the Eagle Bluffs staff received permission from the City of Columbia to trap and band wood ducks on the wastewater wetlands, a series of shallow wetland cells dominated by cattail and duckweed. This type of habitat provides an enormous amount of quality brood-rearing areas for local wood ducks.

In 1998, the volunteers helped trap and band 224 wood ducks. Their efforts were key to achieving this high number.

More good news for the wood duck volunteer program followed in 1999. That's when a large increase in the number of volunteers enabled the Eagle Bluffs program to include rocket netting to augment the already successful brood trapping.

Rocket netting uses rockets to propel nets over birds

attracted to baited areas. After a net has been fired over the birds, the volunteers secure the net, remove the birds and bring them to a biologist who determines each bird's age and gender before banding it.

An abundance of volunteers made rocket netting possible, but this capture technique also opened the door for a whole new age group of volunteers, specifically kids. Rocket netting is less strenuous for both volunteers and wood ducks. It's also a great parent/child activity because parents and youngsters work directly with the birds. Brood traps, in contrast, require little contact with the birds.

Thanks to the addition of rocket netting, volunteers and area staff banded 386 wood ducks in 1999.

Along with its benefits for volunteers, 1999 also was beneficial to wood ducks. That year, seventh- and eighth-grade students of Saint Peter's Catholic School



In 2000, volunteers and area staff banded 366 birds. In 2001, we banded 359 birds. In 2002, volunteers and area staff banded 213 wood ducks. We also relocated several wood duck nesting boxes to more suitable locations.

About 40 volunteers now participate in the nest box maintenance and banding seasons. Nest box maintenance takes place in mid to late February, when the area hosts "Volunteer Nest Box Day." Under sometimes harsh conditions, volunteers and area staff clean and refill 121 nesting boxes with fresh wood chips and inspect boxes to determine if any repairs are required.

The real fun takes place from July 1 into early September when the banding takes place.

Without the volunteers, the wood duck nesting and banding program wouldn't be nearly as successful as it is. The Eagle Bluffs volunteers are the backbone of our efforts to band more than 300 wood ducks each year.

Data received from band recoveries helps the Conservation Department make decisions that ensure the majestic wood duck will be around for future generations to enjoy.

In today's hustle-and-bustle world, it's refreshing that so many people selflessly give up their free time to volunteer for conservation. The Eagle Bluffs' wood duck volunteers, and other Missourians who volunteer for Conservation Department programs and at Department facilities, are critical to our efforts to conserve Missouri's fish, forest and wildlife resources.

If you would like to help at Eagle Bluffs or volunteer on behalf of conservation, contact your local conservation office for opportunities. If each of us does a little, together we can accomplish a lot. ▲

in Fulton established a nest box program on Eagle Bluffs. The students built and installed nest boxes as part of their science and math curriculum.

In the winters of 2000 and 2001, we hosted wood duck box installation days. On these days, the students from Saint Peter's Catholic School arrived in vans and pickup trucks loaded with wood duck boxes, ladders, wood chips, predator flashing and tools. The kids were excited. In addition to learning about wood ducks and other waterfowl and wildlife, they did something positive for the environment.



Plentiful wetlands (top, left) make Eagle Bluffs ideal for studying wood ducks. Volunteers there have stepped up to help a trapping and banding program.





Entrusted to the Future

Many property owners find comfort in preserving their land for others to enjoy and love. by Gene Kelly, photos by Cliff White

"This land has been good to me, and good for me," said Ronald VanDyke about his 317 acres in Mercer County. "Through the years I put a lot sweat into these acres, but it was a labor of love. Now I want others to enjoy it, walk over it, appreciate the wildlife, breathe deep and take in its beauty."

Ronald VanDyke donated his land to the Missouri Department of Conservation as a memorial to his parents and brother who also were interested in resource management. The property now is called "The Russell B., Hazel S. and Arnold VanDyke Conservation Area." It is open to the public for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities.

Cecilia Fitch also had in mind a memorial when she donated her 167 acres in Platte County.

"My great-grandfather, Dr. Fredrick Marshall, owned this land," Fitch said. "We repaired the cabin and enjoyed many weekends with friends, viewing wildlife and enjoying the calmness of the land and the silence of being away from the city. It's a wonderful place. Others should have the same enjoyment."



A donation of 167 acres by Cecilia Fitch resulted in the Dr. Frederick Marshall Conservation Area, where visitors can enjoy the Platte River (left).



The George and Vida Martin Access in Oregon County was named for the parents of Maureen Cover (above).

A Heritage of Giving

Almost immediately after the Conservation Department was established in 1936, future-minded citizens began stepping forward to contribute to Missouri's natural resource heritage. Since 1960, the Department's donation program has accepted 132 gifts of land totaling 21,866 acres with a value of \$15,715,304. Some land offers have been declined because they were inaccessible to the public or too small, or because the donor placed too many restrictions on the gift.

There also were 111 "bargain sales" (land willingly sold to the Department for less than fair market value) totaling 363,052 acres with a value of \$12,840,909. Citizens have also made cash donations (ranging from \$1 to \$325,000) totaling \$10,194,590. Overall, the value of gifts donated to the Department for the citizens of Missouri from 1960 through 2002 is \$38,750,803.

The tract is named in honor of Fitch's great-grandfather, the first physician in Platte City. He arrived in 1837, when the town was still known as Martinsville. "I'm sure my great-grandfather would be pleased with my decision to make certain this land will always be available for people to enjoy," Fitch said.

Small tracts also can be important if strategically located or if they have special features. In 1997, for example, Maureen and Dan Cover deeded eight acres on the Warm Fork of Spring River near Thayer in Oregon County to provide boating access. The George and Vida Martin Access is a memorial to Maureen's parents.

However, this was not the Covers' first gift to the citizens of Missouri. In 1985 the Covers donated 282 acres in Oregon County for use by the general public.

"We are pleased to have the opportunity to donate this land to the Department of Conservation and encourage others to do the same," Dan Cover said. "Giving the land wasn't a totally altruistic thing on our part. There were economic incentives. We used the tax

breaks to buy a larger piece of land.”

The 736 acres Dan and Maureen bought were closer to their home, making it possible for them to invest more time in their land. The Covers spent the next 15 years, as well as considerable time and expense, converting the vegetation on the tract from brush to prairie. They recently donated the tract, located near the Howell/Oregon County line, to the Department to ensure that their efforts will be continued.

Because of Dan’s lifelong fascination with hawks, the Dan and Maureen Cover Prairie Conservation Area is managed primarily to provide falconers a place to hunt and train their hawks. Special regulations provide falconers the first opportunity to hunt quail and small game in the fall before the area opens to the general public.

Some donated tracts have high outdoor educational potential because of their location. Thanks to the family of William Lowe, the public can enjoy 133 acres along the south city limits of Mexico, Missouri. William Lowe purchased the property in 1949 and lived on it with his family for more than 50 years.

Pearle Lowe recalls her husband’s love of the land and his family: “He would often take our three daughters and me on nature hikes.”

“Our father was greatly concerned that the property might some day be subdivided,” said Barbara Rynearson, one of William and Pearle Lowe’s three daughters.

Lowe loved to hunt and fish, and was very committed to adhering to the state’s wildlife regulations. To honor his dedication to sound conservation and ethics, his family wanted the property to be preserved in its natural state and available to the public.



Pearl Lowe (left) and her daughter, Barbara Rynearson donated land near Mexico in memory of William Lowe.

Choosing the Best Way to Donate

Those interested in donating land to the Department can choose from a variety of methods. In some cases, grantors may make special requests to suit their personal needs. Donors have input into naming the donated tract, which they often name after themselves or their family. Always, an appropriate sign is erected. Depending on the capabilities of the land, it may be open to public use.

Following are four general methods of donating land:

✚ **Warranty Deed**—Land can be donated at any time simply by deeding it over to the Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri. This method allows immediate tax benefits and provides the opportunity for donors to see the results of their generosity.

✚ **Warranty Deed with Life Estate**—Donors continue to operate the land in accordance with an agreement with the Department, which may include some restrictions. Grantors continue to pay the taxes, control public access and conduct other normal land-use activities during their lifetime or until they choose to relinquish the life estate and turn it over to the Department. This method provides some tax benefits and eliminates concern about future ownership of the land.

✚ **Beneficiary Deed**—Grantors file a beneficiary deed with the county recorder and send a copy to the Department. The land automatically goes to the Department at the time of the grantor’s death. The beneficiary deed eliminates the need for probate and provides tax benefits to the grantor’s estate. Grantors can revoke the beneficiary deed at any time.

✚ **Will**—Donors commonly convey property via their last will and testament. This method assures that the land will be deeded to the Conservation Department and provides tax benefits to the grantor’s estate. It is always in the grantor’s best interest to discuss the potential gift with the Conservation Department before the will is finalized. Wills are not revocable after death of the grantor.

✚ **Trusts**—Donors increasingly use *inter vivos*, or lifetime created trusts, to govern disposition of their property. They create a trust, naming themselves as trustee over the trust assets and often naming spouses or children as successor trustees. The trust document dictates terms for the trustee to convey their property to the Department. Trusts can be either revocable or irrevocable. Prior consultation with the Department is recommended.



Although he made a "life estate" agreement, Carrick "Bose" Davidson recently turned over 270 acres of prime quail habitat in Howell County to the Conservation Department. He then helped with the area's management plan.

"We requested that the tract be used primarily for educational purposes," said Pearle Lowe, "with developments consisting of nothing more than a parking lot, signs and walking paths."

Some donors start with a small tract and gradually add to it. Carrick "Bose" Davidson and Robert G. Paris purchased an 80-acre tract in Howell County in 1958. They gradually added to their ownership until they owned 270 acres.

"We got real serious about quail management," Bose said. "I guess we were doing something right, because one autumn the property was home to 12 coveys. Good quail management not only provided more quail, but also resulted in an increase in other game, including rabbits, turkey and deer."

Bose and the widow of Robert Paris eventually donated the land to the Conservation Department, but retained a life estate. Retaining a life estate assures the donor that the property will go to the Department any time the donors choose to relinquish the life estate or at their death. The holder of a life estate still retains control of the property.

"I decided recently to turn the property over to the Department so that public can benefit from using it," Bose said. "I am pleased that the Department let me be part of the planning team that developed the management plan for the area."

Hunting and fishing seasons on the Carrick W. Davidson and Robert G. Paris Conservation Area are reduced because of its relatively small size and close proximity to West Plains. However, the tract is very

accessible to local schools for educational programs.

The size of the tract being donated is not important, especially if the land contains unique features or allows access to an existing resource. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Louis S. Sachs and Ms. Nancy R. Sachs recently donated a 15.3-acre tract in St. Charles County to the Department. The tract, which appraised at \$1,030,000, allows people access to the August H. Busch Conservation area on the north side.

Conservation-minded people enjoy their land so much that they often want others to share their natural wealth.

"My wife, Gerhild, and I looked a long time in several states before we found this property," said Graham Brown of his 190 acres in Dent County. "We enjoyed watching the deer and turkey and seeing the flashes of colorful birds. Now we want the general public to enjoy it."

The Browns donated their property to the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, which in turn donated it to the Conservation Department. Gerhild and Graham Brown are both deceased now, but their memorial will always be a reminder of their thoughtful generosity.

For information about the Department's donation program, write to Missouri Department of Conservation, Donation Program Administrator, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, or call 573/751-4115, ext. 3139.

For information about the foundation, write to Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, P.O. Box 366, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0366, or call 573/751-4115, ext. 3379. ▲



Nancy R. and Louis S. Sachs donated land for conservation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SACHS





SCATTERGUNNING *for Squirrels*

by Mark Goodwin
photos by Cliff White

SQUIRREL HUNTERS ARE USUALLY AN AMIABLE, agreeable lot, at least until you ask them about the best way to harvest squirrels. Some hunt only with .22 caliber rifles. Others, for added challenge, opt for muzzle-loading rifles or .22 caliber pistols. Some even use bow and arrow. Hunters from these groups often claim there is no sport in using shotguns to hunt squirrels, and that squirrels riddled with shotgun pellets aren't fit to eat.

For years I held this view. My favorite firearm for squirrel hunting was a .54 caliber, flintlock, muzzle-loading rifle. Loaded with 50 grains of 2F black powder and aimed at a squirrel's head, the rifle did a superb job of fetching squirrels. It also infused hunts with a rich sense of history. In no way was I interested in shotgunning for squirrels.

Then, my friend Mark Haas invited me to join him on a squirrel hunt at his mother-in-law's farm. Mark had told me about this farm in the Bootheel. The ground includes a 60-acre patch of timber that has never been logged. Dominated by huge shellbark hickories, cherrybark oaks and towering pecans, the timber supports tremendous numbers of fox squirrels.

"What a place to hunt squirrels with my flintlock!" I thought. Then Mark added: "The only hitch is you will have to leave your muzzle-loading rifle at home. Rifles worry my mother-in-law. For squirrel hunting, she only allows shotguns."

I had not hunted squirrels with a shotgun for more than 20 years, but I was not about to turn down a chance to hunt squirrels in virgin timber. When I hung up the phone, I started gathering gear for the next day's squirrel hunt. After all, purism has its limits.

I knew how to hunt squirrels with a shotgun. Use large shot, use full choke and limit shots to when only a squirrel's head is visible, or hold point of aim in front of a squirrel and hit it with the edge of the pattern. The principles were easy. I simply had little experience putting them into practice.

The biggest challenge in hunting squirrels with a shotgun is keeping pellets out of the meat.



You can make clean kills without damaging delicious squirrel meat when you know your shotgun patterns.

Mark and I talked about squirrel hunting with shotguns the following morning as we drove to his mother-in-law's farm.

"Done right, a squirrel bagged with a shotgun can be just as fine eating as one that's been cleanly shot with a .22," Mark said. "The key is limiting shots to the head and knowing your shotgun's pattern at different distances."

In the twilight of predawn, Mark dropped me off in a section of the 60-acre woods. I carried an old Hunter Arms, double-barrel 12-gauge shotgun, Fulton Model.



A shotgun allows you to make quick shots at squirrels in cover or on the move.

The left barrel was choked full, and the right barrel was choked modified. Both barrels were loaded with high-brass number 4s.

As Mark had assured, the woods teemed with fox squirrels. Shortly after first light, I spied eight squirrels shaking limbs as they foraged for ripening pecans and shellbark hickory nuts.

A young fox squirrel less than 20 yards away in a pecan tree to my right offered the first shot. I shook a small sapling and imitated the bark of a squirrel. The

young squirrel spun around on its perch and, from behind a limb, peered down at me, with only its head visible. My old double spoke, and the squirrel tumbled. I stood still as squirrels scurried and barked.

Another young fox squirrel, curious over the commotion, jumped to the pecan tree where my first squirrel had been feeding. It, too, peeked at me over a limb, and I sent it tumbling. Thirty minutes later, not having moved from the pecan tree, I cleanly killed another young fox squirrel. I could have finished my limit from that spot, but I wanted to see more of the timber.

I gathered up the three young fox squirrels, strung their feet on a sharpened stick and moved about 100 yards. I sat at the base of a huge sweet gum tree, at least 4 feet in diameter at its base, and waited for other squirrels to appear.

I admired the three squirrels I had already taken. Each was in practically perfect condition. I felt the front legs. Maybe one or two had taken a piece of shot. Their backs and hind legs were unmarred—perfect for frying.

The woods held such an abundance of squirrels, I decided to use my pocket binoculars to study squirrels as they foraged for nuts. I would do my best to shoot only young ones. Within 90 minutes I finished my limit with five young squirrels and an old female that I would use for dumplings.

That evening, as I finished cleaning the squirrels, I thought about the merits of using a shotgun to hunt bushytails. It was still challenging. The challenge was simply different than that of using a rifle.

With a shotgun, the challenge involves selecting your shots to kill a squirrel cleanly without ruining the meat with pellets. This requires learning how your shot patterns at different ranges. I missed two squirrels that day because I misjudged the size of my shot pattern while attempting to “edge” the squirrels.

Overall, my squirrel hunting experience was very satisfying and, as a bonus, it provided me with a great excuse to buy another shotgun. After some looking, I purchased a 28-gauge, Remington 870 Wingmaster from a local gun dealer. The pump shotgun weighed a mere 6 pounds and balanced well in my hands.

My first interest was to pattern the gun carefully at different distances to see how far in front of a squirrel I should hold to edge it with the shot pattern.

At the range, I stapled butcher paper to the patterning boards. With full choke and shotshells holding an ounce of either 4, 5 or 6 shot, I shot at ranges of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 yards. The shooting session revealed that in my shotgun, number 4 shot produced the most consistent patterns. I was ready to take my new gun squirrel hunting.

Waiting for the right shot takes patience. Often squirrels are in range but not in a position for a clear shot.



If you find pecans, sit down and wait. Squirrels love these nuts and will eventually come near you.

A squirrel sitting on its haunches, directly facing you, does not offer a good shotgun target. When a squirrel sits sideways to you on its haunches, you have a shot, but you have to hold high and a little to the left or right to properly edge the squirrel with the pattern. When a squirrel is stretched out full length, you should aim directly in front of the squirrel.

My muzzleloader still sees plenty of time afield, but I now do a fair bit of my squirrel hunting with the 28-gauge. Shotgunning has its advantages. Frequently, squirrels pause only for a moment, with head exposed, before scurrying to the backside of the tree or into a den hole. There isn't enough time for a hunter to take careful aim with a rifle.

With a shotgun, you can shoot just as you would at flying game, quickly, by raising your shotgun, pointing and squeezing the trigger. It's almost like wingshooting.

With skill and proper lead, you can also shoot squirrels on the move. You are more likely to connect shooting freehanded, without a rest. Also, a shotgun allows you to hunt in more places, which increases your hunting opportunities. Some landowners only allow hunting with shotguns, particularly if livestock or homes are close by. On some public areas, rifles are not allowed for any type of hunting.

Shotgunning can provide many challenging and satisfying outings for squirrel hunters. The ultimate reward comes when you sit down to a meal of fried squirrels (without pellets), biscuits and gravy. ▲



JIM RATHER

Avoid damaging meat by hitting the squirrel's head with the edge of the load.



Cattle egret

Birding on Conservation Areas

Story and photos by Jim Rathert

Public land invites both birds and birders.

As I pulled into the parking lot at the Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area near Branson, I felt comfortable asking the husband and wife with binoculars what they were trying to see.

I wasn't surprised when they said "painted bunting." Henning Conservation Area is one of the prime locations in southwestern Missouri to see the rare and colorful bird, as well as other rarities like greater road-runners. I was able to help them spot a male painted bunting perched in a distant cedar tree.

Moments later, two women arrived in a car that had Texas license plates and stepped outside. Armed with binoculars, field guides and day-packs, they, too, were looking for birds.

I asked one of them how she found this location so far from Texas. She said she performed some Internet searches using keywords that included "birding" and "Missouri. She also visited the Conservation Department's and the Audubon Society of Missouri's web sites.

After they arrived in Branson, the women visited the Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery. Friendly staffers at the popular facility directed them to the Henning Conservation Area. The women said the simple fact that this was public land attracted them to the area. They knew that many conservation areas offered parking, privies and well maintained trails.

I joined them for a walk along the wood-chip trail through the woodland and out into the large glade. Although strangers a short time earlier, we listened as



A group from the Rolla Audubon chapter observe an eagle nest at Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area in Boone County.

friends to bird songs and enjoyed the views from the trail together. Nature lovers, especially birders, usually have much in common and form friendships quickly.

My newfound Texas friends were just two of the thousands of birders who reap the harvest of sound wildlife management and stewardship on Conservation Department lands.

Birding likely wasn't a high priority when the "first generation" of conservation areas were acquired and developed. That was 50 years ago, when areas like August A. Busch, James A. Reed, Fountain Grove and Trimble, which was lost to the Smithville Reservoir, were created. Wildlife areas, as they were then called, were generally thought to be places where the public could



Least tern

go hunting and fishing. Funding for these lands came almost exclusively from hunters and anglers and federal excise taxes on hunting and fishing gear.

However, the wildlife professionals of the Conservation Department knew the game

management practices they were prescribing for these areas not only benefited cottontails, bobwhite quail, deer and squirrels, but a host of non-game species, as well.

For example, one of the early practices in the drought prone soils of the Ozarks was construction of small water holes to help the recovery of wild turkey and white-tailed deer populations. These scattered, often fishless ponds also created new homes for amphibians, and drinking and bathing sites for countless numbers of forest birds.

Likewise, small annual food plots of corn, milo and millet helped quail, turkeys and deer survive harsh winter conditions, but they also provided an important food source for cardinals, finches and other seed eating birds.

The conservation landscape changed in November of 1976 when Missouri voters passed the conservation sales tax amendment to the state Constitution. Land management practices and department programs began to change in response to a broader funding base that included “non-consumptive” outdoor enthusiasts.

Following the plans outlined in the Department’s Design for Conservation, researchers began studying the long-term effects of traditional wildlife management on “non-game” bird species. For example, the long-running statewide great blue heron rookery survey by conservation agents dates to that period, as do restoration projects for bringing back nesting populations of bald eagles, trumpeter swans, barn owls and ospreys. The Department also teamed with state universities and colleges to increase knowledge about a host of species, from Swainson’s warblers to loggerhead shrikes. The Department’s management of public land generally reflects a more natural and diverse approach.

Like hunters and anglers, birders take advantage of public conservation lands in Missouri. For example,

Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area south of Columbia attracts birders from around the state, especially during the migration periods. Late last spring I met there with a group of birders from the Ozark Rivers Audubon Society in Rolla.

Sandy Elbert, an active local birder, served as leader and guide. After briefly visiting the City of Columbia wetland cell and glimpsing a rarely seen common moorhen, we headed to 3,500-acre Eagle Bluffs.

During our trek along the gravel road which bisects the wetland, Lynda Richards of Rolla told me how she and a group of friends often visit Little Prairie and White River Trace conservation areas to see birds.

“We like the trails,” she said, “but we’ll also brush-bust to find more secretive species.”

Our Eagle Bluffs group was watching a lone cattle egret and a few lingering blue-winged teal when two endangered least terns flew overhead. Lorraine McFarland of Rolla mentioned that she and her husband keep maps of the Department’s conservation areas in their cars so they can discover new birding opportunities as they travel.

The Conservation Department is making every effort to accommodate and welcome birders to conservation areas.

Eagle Bluffs area manager Tim James said the Conservation Department has benefited from contact with the birding community.

“Rarely a day goes by during migration that I don’t hear from a birder by phone or e-mail about an unusual sighting or the general progress of shorebird migration,” James said. “These reports help me make management decisions that are better both for the birds and for the people who enjoy watching them.”

James has even scheduled what he calls, “A day in the van with Tim.”

“It’s my personal outreach to people in birding groups,” he said. “These sessions allow us to get to know



Blue-winged teal

each other and see things from one another's perspective. The shared time also gives us the chance to discuss management practices."

Wildlife Division Administrator Dave Erickson feels so strongly about the need to strengthen partnerships between the department and organized birding groups that he's asked each district wildlife manager to make contact with local bird clubs.

"From this initiative, good things are already emerging," Erickson said. "Local groups are generating bird check lists for many conservation areas. Larry Rieken, biologist in the Ozark region, was instrumental in hosting the annual spring meeting of The Audubon Society of Missouri in West Plains. Birders from around the state were given guided tours of Conservation Department lands."

Last year, biologist Rob Chapman hosted a group of birders from the Rolla-Salem area on a walking tour of White River Trace Conservation Area. He demonstrated a bird capture technique called mist netting. Rob explained that his management plan relies on the use of prescribed fire to provide diverse habitat for bobwhites, deer, turkey, and myriad species of songbirds.

Conservation Department ornithologist Andy Forbes is assigned to the Missouri Audubon Society office in Columbia.



Their diverse and abundant wildlife habitat make conservation areas ideal destinations for birdwatchers.

"The benefits of being located in the same office are great," he said. "It's been much easier for me to recruit volunteer birders to conduct bird censuses such as the North American Breeding Bird Survey. The ongoing partnership between the Department and Audubon focuses each on common goals and increases the effectiveness of both organizations. ▲



Female black and white warbler



Venison Roast

Savoring Venison

Venison, the healthiest red meat of all, grows wild in Missouri.

By Tony Weiss, DVM; photos by Cliff White

Even though deer meat is healthy and nutritious, a lot of families don't savor the thought of dad filling their freezer with venison. That's probably because they've never experienced venison at its best.

Many hunters have most of their venison made into jerky and sausage, even though this greatly increases the cost for processing. Often they end up with more jerky and sausage than they can stomach and end up giving some of it away. Also, such meat products are salty and high in fat.

To get the most nutritional and economic value from your deer, have it processed into cuts that are easiest to prepare.

Treat the tenderloins as something special. They are the strips from inside the lower back. (My butcher calls them catfish because of their shape.) These two pieces can be sliced into small, 1-inch thick medallions and cooked like tiny steaks. They are so tender that marinating is unnecessary. If you want to impress someone with how good deer can taste, serve them venison tenderloins.

Loin chops are another choice cut. Our family likes chops grilled 5

to 7 minutes per side, or pan fried. However, you must filet them from the bone, and also trim away most of the fat and gristle to eliminate gaminess. Some chops will end up as several smaller pieces as you trim away all white tissue. Marinating chops usually isn't necessary if they came from a young deer.

Every cut of deer will taste better if you trim away all white tissue, including bone, fat, cartilage and tendons before cooking.

Marinades usually enhance the flavor of venison. Marinating also makes the meat juicier and more tender. You can purchase prepared marinades, or just mix up a con-

coction with whatever is in the refrigerator. Some good marinades consist of one or more of these:

Italian salad dressing (oil & vinegar)

Teriyaki or Worcestershire sauce

Wine

Lemon juice

Ginger ale

Fruit juice

Soy sauce

Exploit the spice rack. Add salt, pepper, garlic, whatever sounds good. Marinate your meat from 30 minutes to 24 hours.

Round steaks from the rear legs are lean, tasty and easy to cook. They are a little less tender than chops, so we always marinate them. We then fry them as we would chops. Sometimes we slice them into thin strips for oriental stir-fry dishes, or use them to make stroganoff.

Have the rest of the deer ground up, as lean as possible. Two-pound packages of lean, ground venison are perfect for preparing lasagna, spaghetti sauce or chili. Used this way, few people can tell the difference between venison and beef.

If you want to make burgers, you should mix the lean venison with

an equal amount of ground beef. Burgers composed of 100-percent venison will be too dry.

Soups and stews are also excellent ways to prepare venison. The ingredients of stews and soups are limited only by your imagination. A stew made from cubes or thin strips of venison mixed with brown beans, wild rice, onions and potatoes is especially good during the winter. If you don't eat it all in one sitting, you'll find that the flavor of a stew improves with a day or two in the refrigerator as the flavors of the various components meld.

If, despite your best culinary enticements, your family still declines to dine on the purest, leanest red meat available, look into donating your deer to the Share the Harvest program. This program exists to provide nutritious protein to needy families. Find out more about the Share the Harvest Program in the current Fall Deer

and Turkey Hunting Information booklet or go to <www.mdc.mo.gov/hunt/deer/share/>.

Venison CHOPS

Heat 1 tablespoon oil and 1 tablespoon butter in skillet. Roll chops in equal amounts of seasoned flour and Italian bread crumbs. Brown each side about 5 minutes.

Teriyaki Marinade FOR VENISON

¼ cup vegetable oil
¼ cup soy sauce
2 tbsp. ketchup
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
¼ tsp. pepper
1 tbsp. fresh ginger, chopped
1 tsp. garlic powder

Mix well, pour into a large zip-type bag, add venison tenderloin and

seal. Turn several times to make sure all of the meat is covered. Marinate in the refrigerator for 8-12 hours. (The fresh ginger breaks down the meat so it is less tough.)

Steve Rosner's FAMOUS CHILI

1 or 2 lbs. ground venison or hamburger
1 large onion, chopped
2 tbsp. cider vinegar
1 tbsp. granulated garlic
½ tsp. McCormick Seasoned Pepper Blend
1 tbsp. chili powder
1 tbsp. cumin
1 8-oz. can tomato sauce
1 4-oz. can mushroom pieces, drained
1 6-oz. can tomato paste
1 qt. home canned tomatoes
3-4 cans mild chili beans, undrained
1 15-oz. can diced tomatoes with chilis and peppers (or Italian spicy tomatoes)

In tall stockpot, brown burger and chopped onion, add cumin and chili powder to meat as it browns. Add vinegar, granulated garlic, 4 shakes of Tabasco sauce and seasoned pepper blend.

Add tomato paste, sauce, canned tomatoes and diced tomato/pepper mix. Stir and simmer 15 minutes. Add mushroom pieces, drained, and chili beans.

Set out bowls, crackers, cheese and sour cream to top the steaming chili.

Venison Steaks with MADEIRA SAUCE

2 - 2 ½ lb. venison round steaks (Seal in zip-type bag with 3 cups milk and soak overnight.) Trim steaks to remove tallow and membranes.



Teriyaki Marinade



Steve Rosner's famous chili



Roast venison loin
with cranberry sauce

Seasoned Flour:

½ cup flour
1 tsp. seasoned salt
¼ tsp. dried ginger
¼ tsp. dried thyme
1 tsp. granulated garlic
¼ tsp. fresh ground pepper

Heat 2 tbsp. butter + 2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil to sizzling.

Dredge venison steaks in seasoned flour, place in hot skillet. Sear the first side until crispy, turn and cook the other side.

Remove steaks, keep warm.

Deglaze pan with ½ cup Madeira wine, add 1 cup red currant jelly and stir until hot. Pour into sauce boat and serve with steaks.

Roast Venison Loin with CRANBERRY SAUCE

Start this project 24 to 48 hours before serving.

1 small lemon sliced into thirds
2 thick slices of orange
2 slices of peeled fresh ginger

1 ½ cup sugar
1 small bay leaf

Place the above ingredients in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Reduce the heat and boil uncovered, until syrupy, about 10-15 minutes.

Remove from heat and stir 2 cups fresh cranberries (reserve 5 berries) and a jigger of gin into the syrup. Pour into glass bowl, cover and refrigerate overnight, stirring twice. Pierce reserved berries, place in small glass bowl, pour gin over them and let them marinate separately.

Marinate 4 pounds of venison tenderloin for 24 - 48 hours in mixture of ½ cup white vinegar mixed with 1 qt. water. Discard liquid and rinse well after marinating.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Rub the venison with olive oil, salt, pepper and five chopped cranberries. Press the seasoning into the meat. Set the loin on a rack in roasting pan, cover with foil and roast until inner temperature reaches

135 degrees on meat thermometer.

While venison is cooking, discard bay leaf, lemon, ginger and orange slices. Puree half the cranberries and half the liquid until smooth.

Pour 2 cups dry red wine into saucepan, heat to boiling, reduce to ½ cup (boil about 5 minutes). Add 2 cups beef stock to reduction, bring to a boil, add the cranberry puree, simmer, uncovered until slightly thickened, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat.

Strain the remaining cranberries and add them to the sauce with ¼ tsp. salt and pepper. Add 2 tbsp. cold butter cut into pieces. Stir any pan juices into sauce mixture. Garnish with fresh thyme sprigs.

Venison ROAST

5-lbs. venison roast
¼ tsp. Pepper
2 tbsp. seasoned salt
3 stalks celery
1 large onion, halved
1 apple, cored and quartered
4 carrots
1 orange, cut in half
8 ozs. Italian salad dressing
1 cup water
1 cup red wine

Rinse and dry venison, trim any membranes or tallow from roast. Season venison with salt and pepper. Place in square plastic container. Add remaining ingredients and marinate overnight. Pour into baker, cover with lid and bake at 250 degrees for 2 ½ hours. ▲



Venison Steaks with Madeira Sauce



Habitat Hints: Extend fall color with native grasses

Everyone associates autumn with the colorful foliage of maple, oak and hickory leaves, but most people don't think of using native grasses to add color to their late summer, fall and winter landscapes.

By October, our tall, fountain-shaped, native grasses turn gold, orange, red and purple. November rains intensify these colors, which endure throughout the winter, adding warmth and texture to those stark, gray days.

Plant taller grasses, such as big bluestem and Indian grass, for a dramatic accent in small settings or in large meadow plantings. Short grasses, such as prairie dropseed and little bluestem, are good to highlight perennials in flower beds.

Splitbeard bluestem turns a rich russet in the fall. Its fluffy silver seed heads adorn the length of the stem, making this an outstanding ornamental grass.

Besides adding color and texture to the fall and winter palette, native grass seed heads attract and feed songbirds and other wildlife well into winter.

To learn more about Missouri native grasses and wildflowers, visit the *Grow Native!* web site at www.grownative.org. Click on the "Native Plant Info" then "Plant Search." — *Bonnie Chasteen*



Musicians to perform at Powder Valley CNC

Music with an environmental message will be on the program Oct. 9 at Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center in Kirkwood. Musical duo Curt Carter and Tom Connelley will perform music ranging from acoustic rock to bluegrass beginning at 7 p.m.

Their CD, "Songs from the Seventh Direction," is titled from a Lakota Sioux legend about the strength and wisdom within each person. Call 314/301-1500 for reservations.

MOBILITY-IMPAIRED HUNTERS GET A SHOT AT CLEARWATER DEER

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will host a muzzleloader deer hunt for non-ambulatory hunters Oct. 30-31 in the Watchable Wildlife Area at Clearwater Lake in southeast Missouri. Each participant will be allowed to take two deer, one of which must be antlerless. Applicants must have permanent mobility impairments. The application deadline is Sept. 10. For more information, contact Jason Wilson, 573/223-7777.



MUSKIE/BUDDY BASS TOURNAMENT SLATED FOR OCT. 1-3

The 30th Pomme de Terre Open Team Muskies and Bass Tournament will be held Oct. 1-3, and you can

get a lesson from the pros beforehand.

The tournament offers \$4,000 in cash and prizes. Daily and overall prizes will be awarded for longest muskies caught and released and for the biggest bass. Participants can fish Friday only for \$40 per team. The entry fee for Saturday and Sunday is \$80 per team.

Proceeds from the tournament benefit the muskellunge management programs of Muskies, Inc., a nonprofit organization. In the past, funds were used to purchase nets to

catch hatchery brood stock for the Conservation Department's muskie stocking program.

For entry forms and full tournament details, contact Denis Ledgerwood, 636/527-5366; Carl Marks, 417/745-2381; Dick McPike, 816/436-4909; or Wayne Humphrey, 314/878-7732. Information also is available online at www.missourimuskie.org.

Marks also is the contact for anglers who want a muskie fishing lesson before the tournament. For a \$100 donation to Muskies, Inc., a member of the Pomme de Terre Chapter will take you on a guided fishing trip Sept. 18 and share the secrets of how to catch "the fish of a thousand casts." The deal includes a banquet and social after the day's fishing.





Sept. 25 is Great Outdoors Day at Dalton Range

The Andy Dalton Training Center and Shooting Range at Bois D'Arc Conservation Area will host the 10th Great Outdoors Day from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Sept. 25. The event features hands-on activities, including shooting sports, fishing and hiking. The training center is off Highway UU, nine miles west of Willard.

2004 deer hunting opportunities unprecedented

Missouri deer hunters will find an unprecedented abundance of hunting opportunities this year, including the chance to win lifetime hunting and fishing permits.

This year's firearms deer season includes five portions totaling 36 days.

Archery deer season opens Sept. 15 and runs

through Jan. 15. Any number of antlerless firearms deer hunting permits will be available in 81 counties. You don't even have to buy a regular archery or firearms deer permit before purchasing the \$7 antlerless permits.

Hunters who own and hunt on at least five acres can receive two archery turkey tags, two archery deer tags, two archery antlerless deer tags, two firearms turkey tags and a firearms any-deer tag free. Those who own and hunt on at least 75 acres qualify for extra antlerless tags.

Hunters who obtain any of these permits by Nov. 5 automatically are entered in a drawing for two Resident Lifetime Conservation Partner Permits and framed wildlife art prints. Buying early also ensures you won't get caught in the last-minute permit buying rush, which could be heavier than usual this year.

You can buy permits online at www.wildlifelicense.com/mo or by phone at 800/392-4115. Phone and online purchases carry a \$2 surcharge. Delivery may take up to 10 days. Details of deer hunting permits and regulations are online at www.missouriconservation.org/hunt/deer/ or in the 2004 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information booklet, available wherever hunting permits are sold.



Share the harvest sets ambitious goals

"Share the Harvest," the program that puts tons of venison on needy Missourians' tables each year, is expanding. The program's sponsors are looking for new underwriters and meat processors to join the effort.

Share the Harvest is sponsored by the Conservation Department and the Conservation Federation of Missouri. Originally, the program allowed local sponsors to work with meat processors and food banks to get venison to needy families. Hunters had to pay for processing themselves. Even so, the number of local Share the Harvest programs has grown.

The program really took off when sponsors began putting up cash to help hunters pay venison processing costs. This, along with increased deer numbers and expanded hunting opportunities, led to phenomenal growth in recent years. Venison donations nearly doubled from 2002 to 2003, topping 88 tons last year.

Conservation Federation Executive Director Dave Murphy says he expects the program to continue expanding rapidly. His optimism is based on several factors.

"For one thing, we have even more hunting opportunity this year," Murphy said. "The urban portion of firearms deer season has been expanded, and antlerless deer permits are more available than ever. Conservation Department employees and Conservation Federation members are working hard to expand the number of local programs and get more hunters interested in donating whole deer."

Murphy said the Missouri Legislature gave Share the Harvest another boost this year when it allowed meat processors to be certified by state inspectors instead of the federal inspection that was required previously. Also, financial support for the program increased this year. In 2003, the Conservation Commission put up \$65,000 to help pay for processing donated venison. This year it has approved \$100,000. The Federation is looking for other sponsors.

"I expect this thing to continue to grow," Murphy said. "It's limited mostly by the amount of money we can raise to pay for processing. The Conservation Federation already pays \$35 toward processing a whole deer. This year we hope to have dozens of local programs that pay the remainder of processing costs so hunters can donate venison at no cost to themselves."

To learn more about Share the Harvest, contact Murphy at 573/634-2322, mofed@socket.net.





Conservation agent candidates sought

The Conservation Department is accepting applications for conservation agent positions until Oct. 22.

Agents are the Conservation Department's primary representatives in their assigned areas. They enforce the rules of the *Wildlife Code* and other state laws, conduct public meetings, perform wildlife censuses, investigate fish kills and help landowners with forestry, wildlife and fisheries management.

This is a physically demanding job. Applicants must be able to run sprints, jump over obstacles, climb fences, and lift and carry heavy loads.

Minimum qualifications include a bachelor's degree in forestry, fisheries or wildlife management, biology, law enforcement, agriculture, education or related subjects.

Agent trainees must live at designated training facilities in Jefferson City during the six-month training period. Upon completing the training program, new agents must accept assignment anywhere in Missouri.

The training class is tentatively set to begin April 1, 2005. Typical class size is between 12 and 20 students.

For application forms, visit www.missouriconservation.org/about/jobs/ or contact Human Resources Division, Missouri Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102, 573/ 751-4115.

FRUITS OF AUTUMN

In late summer and autumn, Missourians who venture into wooded areas may come across an eye-catching cluster of glossy, bright, reddish-orange berries on or near the ground. Some people describe the fruit cluster as resembling a short corn cob with berries in place of corn kernels. Because the plant that produced them has withered or shriveled from an early frost, the fruits often lie on the ground.

Two closely related woodland plants produce these fruits and, with only the fruits in hand, it is difficult to tell which species is responsible for them.

The two possibilities are jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) and green dragon (*Arisaema dracontium*). Both are widespread and relatively common in Missouri. Their floral parts and leaves are mostly green and inconspicuous throughout most of the growing season. In autumn, however, the fruits are no longer hidden beneath green foliage and are easy to spot. — Tim Smith



NEW! nature photography book

Conservationist readers have long appreciated the superb nature photographs that illustrate each issue of the magazine. Now you can enter nature photographer Jim Rathert's photographic world through "In Focus," a new book from the Nature Shop.

During his 20 years as a nature photographer, Rathert has documented the stunning variety of animals, plants and landscapes found in the Show-Me State. He describes his work as "an artistic outlet, a lifelong and intimate relationship with nature and hands-on experience with the evolution of photo and print technology."

The softbound book contains 120 pages in a 9- by 12-inch format. Its 175 color photographs range from expansive landscapes to tiny details. They are organized into chapters on flowing water, prairies, forests, glades and wetlands. Each chapter includes tips for nature photographers and a list of some of Rathert's favorite photographic locations.

"In Focus" is available for \$18, plus tax, at Conservation Nature Centers and regional Conservation Department offices. You can order electronically at www.mdcnatureshop.com, or by calling toll-free 877/521-8632. Ask for item number 10-0270.





No MOre Trash has Missourians pitching in

During No MOre Trash! Week May 1-9, more than 4,000 people picked up 13,500 bags of trash, truckloads of tires and other items too big to fit into trash bags.

Volunteers ranging from Adopt-A-Highway groups and Missouri Stream Teams to jail inmates took part in the week-long cleanup. They collected everything from rusting appliances and a fully decorated Christmas tree to a \$100 bill.

Several Missouri high school students created video public service announcements about litter. The Missouri departments of Conservation and Transportation are co-sponsoring a video ad contest for youths under age 22. Winners receive \$200. Visit <www.nomoretrash.org> for more information.

Congratulations to the winners of the No MOre Trash! Video Ad contest for 2003-2004:

- * Matt Albritton, Whitney Chapman, and Brennan Martin from Seneca High School for their video "Passin' the Gum."
- * Tom Gribble, Syllas Stacy, Ryan Morrow, Mike Boschert and Andrew Phillion from St. Charles High School for "Trash Monster."
- * Austin Hicks and Jordan Burr from Blue Springs High School for their video featuring a young child walking on the beach.
- * Ben Alagna from Francis Howell North High School for his video featuring Agent Sam McFluggen.

Now is the time to go after unwanted grasses

Have you been working to get rid of brome or fescue grass to improve habitat for bobwhite quail and other wildlife on your land? If so, now is the time to apply herbicides to these plants.

Cool-season grasses can reduce the quail potential of fence lines or other grassy areas by creating a dense turf that crowds out seed-producing plants and blocks quail movement. These grasses resume growing with the return of cool weather. Because grass-selective herbicides work best when plants are growing, now is an excellent time to treat problem areas.

Spraying cool-season grasses can expose bare ground, creating dusting areas that quail need and thinning turf, permitting quail to move freely. Knocking back cool-season grasses also gives more beneficial plants a chance to establish themselves.

The private land services biologist in your regional Conservation Department office can tell you about cost-sharing programs to help improve quail habitat. Quail Unlimited chapters also can help. For information about QU programs, contact Jef Hodges, 660/885-7057, <bobwhite@iland.net>.

WOMEN INVITED TO PHEASANT HUNT AND CLINIC

Women age 16 and older can take part in the Women's Pheasant Hunt and Clinic Oct. 30 at Hertzog's Hunting Reserve near Holden. The Conservation Department sponsors the event to introduce novice hunters to the sport of pheasant hunting in a relaxed, non-competitive environment.

Along with the pheasant hunt, participants will learn about wildlife conservation and dog handling. They will also hone their marksmanship skills by shooting clay targets. There will be special emphasis on safety, ethics, sportsmanship and hunting traditions.

The cost of the event is \$15. Registration closes Oct. 12. Hunters who were born on or after Jan. 1, 1967 are required to have successfully completed a Hunter Education Certification Course. A small game hunting license is required. Shotguns are available, but participants are encouraged to bring their own shotguns and ammunition.

For more information or to register for the Women's Pheasant Hunt and Clinic, contact the Missouri Department of Conservation, 2010 S. Second St., Clinton, MO 64735, 660/885-6981.



Outdoor Calendar

Hunting	open	close
Coyotes	5/10/04	3/31/05
Crow	11/1/04	3/3/05
Deer/Turkey, Archery	9/15/04	11/12/04
	11/24/04	1/15/05
Deer, Firearms		
Urban Antlerless Only	10/8/04	10/11/04
Youth	11/6/04	11/7/04
November	11/13/04	11/23/04
Muzzleloader	11/26/04	12/5/04
Antlerless	12/11/04	12/19/04
Groundhog	5/10/04	12/15/04
Squirrels	5/22/04	2/15/05
Rabbits	10/1/04	2/15/05
Turkey, fall firearms	10/11/04	10/24/04
Pheasants		
North Zone	11/1/04	1/15/05
South Zone	12/1/04	12/12/04
Quail	11/1/04	1/15/05
Ruffed Grouse	10/15/04	1/15/05
Doves	9/1/04	11/9/04
Sora and Virginia Rails	9/1/04	11/9/04
Common Snipe	9/1/04	12/16/04
Woodcock	10/15/04	11/28/04
Teal (sunrise to sunset)	9/11/04	9/19/04
Fishing		
Black Bass (most southern streams)	5/22/04	2/28/05
Trout Parks	3/1/04	10/31/04
Bullfrog & Green Frog	Sunset	Midnight
	6/30/04	10/31/04
Nongame Fish Stream Giggling	9/15/04	1/31/05
Trapping		
Beaver	11/15/04	3/31/05
Furbearers	11/15/04	2/15/05
Otters and Muskrats	11/15/04	varies
See regulations for otter zones, limits and dates		

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code*, the current summaries of Missouri Hunting and Trapping Regulations and Missouri Fishing Regulations, the Fall Deer and Turkey Hunting Information booklet, the Waterfowl Hunting Digest and the Migratory Bird Digest. To find this information on our Web site go to <<http://www.missouriconservation.org/reg/>>.

The Conservation Department's computerized point-of-sale system allows you to purchase or replace your permits through local vendors or by phone. The toll-free number is 800/392-4115. Allow 10 days for delivery of telephone purchases. To purchase permits online go to <<http://www.wildlifelicence.com/mo/>>.

AGENT NOTEBOOK

I received a call during

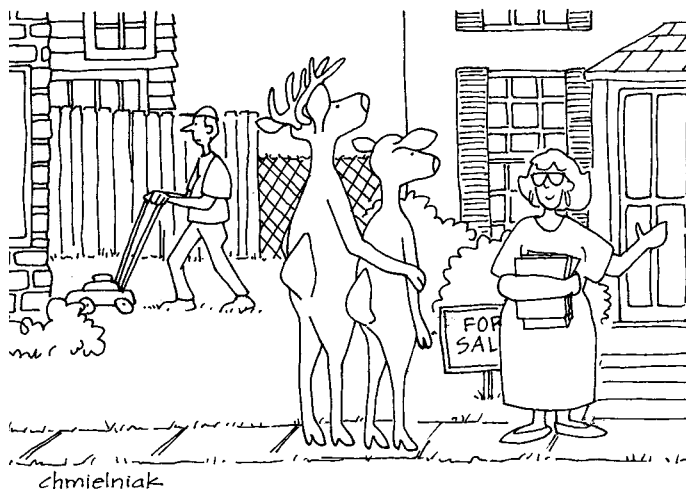
deer season from a land-owner in Monroe County.

The farmer said he was sleeping when his door bell rang. He rose and saw a young man in blaze orange standing at his door. He opened the door.

The man told the farmer that he had shot a buck and wondered if the farmer would let him go retrieve it. The visitor pointed in the direction of one of the farmer's fields. This bewildered the farmer because he doesn't allow anyone but his family to hunt on his property. The farmer then asked the man where he was hunting when he shot the deer. The man replied, "On the public ground." The farmer scratched his head doubtfully. The nearest public ground was about five miles away.

The farmer started to get a little suspicious. He asked exactly on what public ground the man had shot the deer. The man replied, "I shot it off the road—that is all public hunting ground." The farmer told the hunter that he thought that road hunting was illegal, but the man insisted the road was "public ground."

The farmer then told his visitor to wait a minute and he would be right back. That is when he called me. The man quickly departed, but not before the farmer got his license plate number. With a little investigation, I was able to track the him down and introduce him to a new sort of public ground, the courthouse. — *Paul Kay*



Suburban neighborhoods are attractive to deer.



Program Schedule

Television the way Nature intended!

Broadcast Stations

Cape Girardeau UPN "The Beat" WQTV / Saturdays 8:30 a.m.

Columbia KOMU (Ch 8 NBC) / Sundays 11:00 a.m.

Hannibal KHQA (Ch 7 CBS) / Weekends, check local listing for times

Kansas City KCPT (Ch 19 PBS) / Sundays 7:00 a.m.

Kirksville KTVO (Ch 3 ABC) / Saturdays 5:00 a.m.

St. Joseph KQTV (Ch 2 ABC) / Weekends, check local listings for times

St. Louis KSDK (Ch 5 NBC) / Sundays, 4:30 a.m.

Warrensburg KMOS (Ch 6 PBS) / Sundays 6:30 p.m.

Cable Stations

Branson Vacation Channel / Fri., Sat. 8:00 p.m.

Brentwood Brentwood City TV / Daily, check local listing for times

Cape Girardeau Charter Cable Ed. Ch. 23 / Thursdays 6:00 p.m.

Chillicothe Time Warner Cable Channel 6 / Wednesdays 7:00 p.m.

Hillsboro JCTV / Mondays 12 p.m. & 6 p.m.

Independence City 7 / Thurs. 2 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. & Sundays 8 p.m.

Joplin KGCS / Sundays 6 p.m.

Mexico Mex-TV / Fridays 6:30 p.m. & Saturdays 6:30 p.m.

Noel TTV / Fridays 4:30 p.m.

O'Fallon City of O'Fallon Cable / Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

Parkville City of Parkville / First and third Tuesdays of the month 6:30 p.m.

Perryville PVTv / Mondays 6 p.m.

Raymore Govt. Access-Channel 7 / Various, check local listings for times

Raytown City of Raytown Cable / Wed. 10:00 a.m. & Saturdays 8:00 p.m.

St. Charles City of St. Charles-Ch 20 / Tues. 5:00 p.m. and Wed. 10:00 a.m.

St. Louis Charter Communications / Saturdays 10:30 a.m.

St. Louis City TV 10 / Mondays 11:30 a.m., Wednesdays 3:30 p.m.

St. Louis Cooperating School Districts / Wednesdays 9 a.m.

St. Louis DHTV-21 / Mondays 10:30 a.m.

St. Louis KPTN-LP/TV58 / Thursdays 10:00 a.m.

St. Peters City of St. Peters Cable / Various, check local listings for times

Ste. Genevieve Public TV / Fridays 1 p.m., 6 p.m. & 12 midnight

Springfield KBLE36 / Nine times a week, check local listing for times

Sullivan Fidelity Cable-Channel 6 / Wed. 11:00 a.m. and Fri. 7:00 p.m.

Union TRC-TV7 / Tuesdays 3:00 p.m.

West Plains OCTV / Mondays 6:30 p.m.

Meet Our Contributors



Teacher and free-lance writer **Mark Goodwin** lives in Jackson. His interests in the outdoors range from bird watching and hiking to hunting and fishing in the Missouri Ozarks and foothills.

Gene Kelly worked for the Conservation Department for 37 years. His responsibilities varied from wildlife damage expert to donations coordinator. Retired, he now lives in Columbia with his wife, Glenda, and enjoys flyfishing and building fly rods.



Conservation Department wildlife biologist **Ryan Kelly** specializes in wetland management. His hobbies include waterfowl hunting, bluegill fishing and spending time with family and friends. Ryan said his father taught him to love the outdoors and be a good conservationist.

Jim Rathert maintains a 35-year "love affair" with the birds of Missouri. In fact, His early interest in birds led him into the broader field of wildlife and nature photography. His interests include birds, photography, and cooking and eating all manner of ethnic foods.



Tony Weiss is a veterinarian in Florissant. He is a member of a Stream Team and has adopted a stretch of Coldwater Creek. He also manages the family property in Clark County for the benefit of wildlife. He says he plays soccer whenever possible.



OPERATION GAME THIEF

1-800-392-1111



Sweet Onion

Wild onion, sometimes called fall glade onion, provides a rich splash of color on limestone glades in southern Missouri from July through September. — *Jim Rathert*